CHARLOTTE PENCE

The Weight of the Sun

I like the 4 a.m. feedings best, tilting the rocking chair back and forth with my toes, observing how the invisible lines of our dark yard rest against the lines of other yards—of other lives. Before the sun rises, this small wedge of the world momentarily in agreement: everyone on this block wishing for sleep, for peace, for the coming day to be better than the last. I like thinking how the grass growing a thousandth of an inch every fifteen minutes is celebrating something as I celebrate solving small mysteries like learning a red fox is the one who flattens the path through the lawn.

Mainly I like pretending I am the only one awake, the only one seeing the world at this instant. The navy sky, thick as blood, is my blood, as the fracture of stars, bright as raw bone, is my bone. I like being reminded that we all began in dark and stars,
that the carbon, nitrogen and oxygen in our bodies was created 4.5 billion years ago in another generation of stars,

that somehow if we could weigh the sun, all rising 418 nonillion pounds of it, we’d see that strength is never needed to begin the day. No, it’s something else. Behind every square of light flipped on, someone is standing or slouching,

stretching or sighing, covering or uncovering her face. Someone is thinking, Today, I will I will I will….

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